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INDIANS OF SHOSHONE OR WIND RIVER RESERVATION.

MAY 21, 1896.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed.

Mr. FISCHER, from the Committee on Indian Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany H. R. 9118.]

The Committee on Indian Affairs, to whom was referred House bill 8893, report as a substitute therefor House bill 9118, with the recommendation that said substitute bill do pass.

This bill ratifies an agreement with the Indians of the Shoshone or Wind River Reservation in Wyoming, entered into by James McLaughlin, United States Indian inspector, on behalf of the United States, on the 22d day of April, 1896, for the transfer and sale to the United States of a tract of land situated in the northeast corner of the said Shoshone Reservation in Wyoming, approximating 55,000 acres, together with a number of medicinal hot springs located upon said tract. The tract of land purchased is beautifully situated on both sides of the Big Horn River, which at this point is a stream about 300 feet in width, with a depth of water in ordinary seasons of from 3 to 5 feet. To the west is the Owl Creek range of mountains; while still farther distant, along the horizon, trends the main range of the Rocky Mountains. To the east of the tract the snow-clad summits of the Big Horn Range are in plain view.

Above and below the reservation on the Big Horn River are valuable stretches of irrigable country, capable of supporting a very large population. The tract itself is broken and rolling, covered with the natural grasses of the region, with here and there clumps of dwarf cedar. Along the Big Horn River, which flows through the tract from south to north, are bodies of level valley and bench lands, easily irrigated from the Big Horn River, and certain to become valuable. There is probably between 1,000 and 1,500 acres of these lowlands, easily irrigated, while a considerable portion of the reservation could be irrigated by ditches taking water higher up the Big Horn River.

The Big Horn Hot Spring, which rises on the tract 200 feet from the east bank of the Big Horn River, has long been celebrated throughout the entire region for its wonderful medicinal qualities, and while owing to its location upon an Indian reservation it has been impossible to provide any accommodations whatever for visitors and health seekers, the spring has been visited for many years past by a large number of people seeking its curative waters for their ailments. These visitors have erected a few very small and very primitive bath houses in the vicinity of the Big Horn Hot Spring. With this exception, there are at present no improvements upon the tract. In spite of the fact of the lack of accommodations people have traveled in years past hundreds of miles to avail themselves of the curing waters, and the record of cures affected

by bathing in the spring has been very remarkable. Dr. J. A. Shuelke, who has had abundant opportunity to judge of the springs as a curative agent, speaking of them says:

It is a fact that out of the total number of patients who have visited the Big Horn Hot Springs, regardless of the character of the disease by which they were afflicted, 95 per cent have either been entirely cured or greatly benefited; and this result is obtained under the most trying circumstances and in the most primitive way, without the necessary adjuncts, such as medical and surgical skill, the different devices used at some of the more frequented European and American thermal resorts, without even the ordinary comforts of life, sometimes even without shelter from the elements.

These springs are especially valuable and curative in all diseases of the blood of whatsoever kind or character, as well as in cases of rheumatism, dyspepsia, and other diseases of the stomach. The Big Horn Spring is one of the largest hot springs in the world. It rises at the foot of a butte nearly 300 feet in height, out of a circular basin about 30 feet in diameter; rising to the surface heavily charged with carbonic acid gas, which throws the water to a considerable height, and with a temperature of about 132° F. It is estimated that the spring runs about 1,250,000 gallons of water each twenty-four hours. The water from this spring forms a stream of considerable size and, after flowing a few hundred feet, falls over a beautiful cascade into the Big Horn River. Besides the Big Horn Spring there are a number of other similar springs in the immediate vicinity, some warmer and some colder than the main spring.

The people who have known for some time past the curative qualities of these springs, and who have been benefited thereby, are extremely anxious that some action be taken by the General Government whereby these springs can be preserved for the use and benefit of the people and be maintained and administered by the Government. The last legislature of the State of Wyoming memorialized Congress to purchase these springs and a tract of land immediately surrounding them. The Indian Department is anxious to have the sale made, as the springs are a source of continual annoyance to the Indians owing to the fact that that portion of the reservation is constantly overrun by those visiting the springs, and further because the Arapahoe and Shoshone Indians on this reservation need the funds which would be derived from the sale of the springs for their maintenance.

The committee is of the opinion that these springs should by no means be allowed to pass into the hands of private individuals for speculative purposes, but that they should be forevermore preserved to the use and benefit of the people of the United States under proper rules and regulations. The price which it is proposed to pay for the springs and the adjacent territory (\$60,000) is certainly very reasonable when the size of the tract (55,000 acres) and the great value of the springs is taken into consideration. There is no doubt but that in a few years this property will have become very valuable. There is every reason to believe that not only will the property increase rapidly in value, but that in a comparatively short space of time it will become self-supporting, and, indeed, yield a revenue to the Government. The leasing of ground and privileges adjacent to the springs is sure to be a considerable source of profit, and the ratification of the agreement with the Indians and the establishment of the Wyoming Hot Springs Reservation will reserve to our people the privileges and benefits of these curative waters and vest in the Government of the United States the title to a very valuable piece of property.